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MONOGRAPH

ON THE

STONE-CARVING AND INLAYING

OF THE

CENTRAL PROVINCES AND BERAR

BY

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STONE-CARVING IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES AND BERAR.

Introductory.

1. The first art practised by mankind as he struggled upwards from the level of the beasts about him was the art of hewing and shaping stones to help him in the daily fight for existence. To fashion knives and spearheads of flint, to clean and shape stones for the fence of his hut, and to cover his tools and weapons with rude scratched patterns, formed the earliest steps of savage man towards humanity. Thus the art of shaping and carving stones is coeval with the dawn of the human race, and the history of human civilization is contained in the history of the development of stone-carving.

The divisions and branches into which this ancient craft was soon split up have lasted down to our own day. The breaker of road metal, the hewer of building stone, and the maker of flints for flintlock guns are indeed brothers in the practice of the earliest human handicraft with the moulder of idols, the fret-worker and the designer of traceries or arabesques in marble; but the stone-breaker and the mason are outside the scope of this compilation and we are only concerned with stone-carving as a decorative art. The development and decline of the art of carving in stone can hardly be traced without a glance at the early history of the motley peoples and widely differing tracts of country from which these provinces have been formed.

Historical Sketch.

2. The country known to the ancient Aryans of upper India as Gondwana has always been a backward land of mountain and jungle infested by wild tribes of savage Gonds and Korkus. The authentic history of this out-of-the-way province can scarcely be said to begin before the end of the fifteenth century with the commencement of Mussulman influence upon it, and the tale of the advance of Hindu civilization among the aboriginal Gonds has to be pieced together from the fables of minstrels and the obscurities of scarcely legible inscriptions. The hero of the Aryan colonization of the Deccan is the semi-mythical Rama, and the story of his adventures in the Ramayan might be rationalized into a tale of the first settlement of the Aryans in the country. Rama's quest of his lost wife Sita among the wild aborigines, his journeys, fasts and battles among the forests of Danduka, his fight with Rawan, the great black chief of the savages, the death of the abductor, and the triumphant recovery of the princess Sita showed to the crowded Hindus of the north the road to a new country for them to enter upon and possess. It is useless to guess at the date of Rama's life or to try to separate fact from fable in his story. Among the mists of antiquity we dimly see a tide of Aryan immigration setting strongly from the north towards the land of Gondwana, and by the time of Asoka (250 B.C.) the scattered Aryan hermits among the ape-like Gonds had done their work and passed away; while the Aryan Buddhist civilization of those days had covered the less inaccessible parts of the country. No doubt the Gonds on the Satpura plateau were as wild and unsubdued as ever, but the district north of the Narbada was subject to the influence, if not the sovereignty, of the Buddhist kings; while the Rajput kingdoms of Dakshina Kosala (Chhattisgarh) and of Vakataka (Berar) were beginning to raise their heads in the south and east of the province.

In the first two centuries of the Christian era, Buddhism slowly dwindled away before the Puranic revival of Brahmanism. The newer creed had never spread very widely among the mass of Hindus, but had remained a fashionable philosophy among princes and nobles. Thus the Aryan influence, which spread steadily over Gondwana, was in the main a Brahmanic influence, and by the end

of the first century of our era the country was pretty well covered by a patchwork of Rajput chiefships. The upper Narbada was occupied by the Kalachuri dynasty of Chedi, the lower Narbada formed part of the kingdom of Malwa; the Satpura plateau was subject to the Yavana princes descended from the mythical Vindhyasakti, while the Haihaya Bansi dynasty was flourishing at Ratanpur (Chhattisgarh) and the south-west was occupied by the ancient principality of Vakataka. It seemed as if the Hindu had finally subjugated the Gond and brought Gondwana once for all within the Aryan pale.

These Rajput princedoms among the Gonds lasted till the end of the twelfth century, but they were never more than a series of handfuls of Hindu nobles bearing feudal sway over the aboriginal inhabitants. As the armies of the Mussulman invaders began to press upon Hindu kingdoms of the Ganges valley, the stream of colonists and adventurers, who had continually reinforced the Rajput rulers, began to fall off and the predominant Aryans began to find it harder and harder to maintain their power and prestige against the rebellious Gonds south of the Narbada. Like the crusading principalities in Palestine of about the same time, the Rajput kingdoms in Gondwana dwindled away as soon as the assistance of their own kinsmen from the north could no longer reach them. The history of this subversal of the Rajput princes by the savage aborigines will never be written. The materials for such a history have perished, if they ever existed. There are no poems telling of the struggle, and even the voice of tradition is silent. A few vague legends of Gaoli or Ahir chieftains, sometimes supposed to have been Scythians or Turanians, survive, but otherwise the history of two centuries is a blank and nothing exists whereby the historian can fill up the long gap between the disappearance of the Rajput princes in the twelfth century and the rise of the Gond rajas in the fifteenth.

During the wars between the Bahmani and Malwa kingdoms at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Gond kingdom of Kherla (district Betul) flourished stormily for over a century till it was merged in the Malwa kingdom in 1433. The prime of the Gond kingdoms came in the early part of the sixteenth century. One Gond dynasty in Garha Mandla held Saugor, the Narbada Valley, Seoni, Mandla and the northern Satpuras. Another in Chanda ruled the modern district of Chanda and a large part of the neighbouring Berar lowlands, while the ancestors of the present Gond Rajas of Nagpur ruling in Deogarh were masters of Betul, Chhindwara, Nagpur, Bhandara and Balaghat. In spite of a nominal submission to the Mughal Emperor at Delhi, these aboriginal princes held sway little less than independent over nearly all the land of Gondwana for a short period.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the north-west of the present province fell under the dominion of the Mussulmans. The defeat and death of the heroic queen Durgavati in 1564 was followed by the Mughal occupation of Saugor, Damoh, Nimar and western Hoshangabad, and before the end of the reign of Jahangir, Berar had become a Mughal province with Mussulman frontier officers stationed at Ashti, Paunar and Ellichpur. This was the limit of direct Mussulman ascendancy in these provinces, and save for the conquests of the Bundela Raja Chatar Sal of Panna in the countries now forming the Panna State the three Gond kingdoms retained their power and possessions till the Maratha conquests in the early eighteenth century. Saugor was occupied by the Marathas in 1735, and in 1743 the Bhonsla Raja of Berar, called in by the Gond princes of Nagpur to settle a succession dispute, established himself as the real master of the Deogarh territories. Within a few years the Gond kingdom of Chanda was subdued and the ancient Haihaya Bansi house of Ratanpur—after an existence of close on seventeen centuries—fell without a blow. By 1796 the Nagpur kingdom covered the whole of the Central Provinces and Berar, besides Orissa and some of the Chhota Nagpur States. The glory of the Marathas was short, but its slow extinction by the Pindari raiders between 1803 and 1818, and the gradual increase of British influence between 1818 and 1830 leading up to the annexation in 1853, are beyond the scope of this compilation. The events since 1853 and the material progress of the country will be referred to later in considering the history and condition of stone-carving within the present century.

Past Development of the Art of Sculpture.

3. The progress of architecture and sculpture in the Central Provinces falls into three or four well-marked periods corresponding to the historical changes already indicated. These periods are :—

(1) The Gupta period previous to 600 A. D.

(2) The mediæval Brahmanic period 600 to 1200 A. D.

(3) The Gond and Mussalman period 1400 to 1700 A. D.

(4) The Maratha period comprizing the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The second and third of these periods are divided by a gap of about two centuries corresponding to the historical gap between the disappearance of the Rajput Chiefs and the rise of the Gond kingdoms. The first and second periods and the third and fourth merge imperceptibly into one another. It will be convenient to use these rather artificial divisions as landmarks and from them sketch in outline the development of the art of stone-carving in these provinces. It would take too long to attempt more than a brief description of one or two of the existing monuments most typical of each period and to try to indicate how they exhibit the progress of the craft.

(1) *Gupta period (before* 600 *A. D.).*—The few architectural remnants surviving from this early period show clear traces throughout of the vanishing Buddhist influence. The earliest and best specimen is the little temple at Tigowa (Tigaon near Bahuriband, Jabalpur), which is attributed to the third century A. D. Here the carved lions at the head of the pillars supporting the characteristic flat roof and the figures of the Ganges and Jumna on each side of the entrance door, though somewhat stiff and archaic, are said by competent persons to show a good mastery of technique. The fine colossal boar and other scattered remnants at Eran (Saugor) belong to the same period as the Tigowa temple and the edict of Asoka at Rupnath. Some door jambs and *sati* stones discovered among the extensive ruins of Sirpur (Raipur) are attributed to the Gupta period, but as the Buddhist influence in Chhattisgarh lasted down to the visit of the Chinese traveller Hwen Tsang in 639 A. D., it is probable that these relics belong to the fifth or sixth century. The cave temples at Bhandak (district Chanda) with their colossal images of Buddha are attributed by General Cunningham to the second or third century A. D., but the carvings found there are more interesting as historical records than as works of art.

It is clear that before the end of the sixth century A. D. the art of sculpture had reached a respectable level in certain centres of the Aryan civilization then being introduced. It is reasonable to infer from the absence elsewhere of carved relics of those days that sculpture was confined to these great centres, and that among the aboriginal population of the villages the art had not even reached its infancy.

(2) *Mediæval Brahmanic period* (600—1200 *A. D*).—During this period the Aryan influence in the country was increasing and developing. The aborigines were settling down to a position of villeinage under the Rajput nobles and Buddhism rapidly became a dim memory. The revival of militant Brahmanism seems to have caused a slight set-back at first in the art of sculpture, but during the eighth century the craft revived under the influence of the new enthusiasm for temple building which gradually gathered force during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. It is to the eleventh and twelfth centuries that most of the ancient temples now existing belong, and they are generally attributed by legend to the famous Hemadpanth, who is said to have built 360 temples between the Ganges and the Godavari. The traditional account of this great architect and master-builder is somewhat extraordinary and gives us one or two indications of the conditions under which he practised his art.

Hemadpanth is said to have been the son of a learned Brahman whose birth was expected to take place at a most unlucky conjunction of the stars, but was delayed till the auspicious moment arrived by hanging his mother up by the feet.

The unfortunate mother died at once, but the son Hemadpanth grew up a master of all sciences and arts. He is said to have cured of an illness the brother of the demon king Rawan and to have obtained as a reward the services of the Rakshasas or devils for the uncongenial task of temple building. One condition only was attached. Every temple was to be begun and finished in a single night, and the demons were then to be given holiday. With these to help him Hemadpanth covered the country between the rivers with temples and left behind him a famous name.

This fairy-tale has surely a basis of historical truth. I take it that the demons of the story were nothing but aboriginal Gonds, and it is probable enough that Hemadpanth did render some medical aid to a chief of the savages and obtain in return the services of a gang of his subjects to help in building and carving the new temples. Many people who have tried to get regular labour out of the Gonds will sympathize with Hemadpanth's inability to get two continuous days' work out of his gang, and the uncomplimentary name applied to the workers was probably bestowed upon them by Hemadpanth himself. If this explanation of the legend is true, it shows that more intimate relations between the Aryan immigrants and the Gond chiefs began to grow up during the ninth and tenth centuries. The employment of the aborigines in building and stone-hewing would soon spread some knowledge of architecture and sculpture among the tribes, and account for the vast increase in the number of temples which were now constructed. In the most out-of-the-way places it is not unusual to find village idols attributed to the great Hemadpanth and rude carved monuments of the dead dating back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries are often met with. A good instance of rustic carving is the spirited group of horsemen on the Mama Jhiria monument in Damoh District, which commemorates a battle between an uncle and a nephew fought in 1121 A. D.

This semi-mythical architect, though spoken of as a contemporary of the demon Rawan, whom Rama slew in the early days of Aryan immigration, is often identified or confused with a certain Pratap Rudra who actually flourished in the twelfth century of our era. This is an indication that Hemadpanth lived in the eleventh or twelfth century, to which most of the Hemadpanthi temples can be assigned.

As an example of such temples the great shrine of Markandi Rishi at Markanda (Chanda) may be taken. Dilapidated as the building now is, enough remains to show how glorious a fane it must have been in its palmy days. The building is most elaborately carved throughout and the whole outer surface is literally covered with sculpture. Rows of human figures, gods, goddesses and demons appear in panels separated by carven lions or elephants, and above their heads are lines of great monkeys and smaller human figures. The work is beautifully and skilfully carved in high relief, but the figures themselves, though easy in posture, have a certain fixed expression of countenance or rather a fixed lack of expression which detracts from their merit. Two plates of the carvings are given showing the boldness of the work and the dilapidation of the building. There are dozens of similar temples, large and small, scattered over the Central Provinces and Berar. As examples I may mention the temple of the Chaunsat Jogini at Bherghat (Marble Rocks), and the ruined shrines of Mandhata, Boramdeo, Pali (Bilaspur) and Janjgir. Any number of other monuments of this age might be mentioned showing how great was the skill of the men or demons who built them. The golden age of Hindu architecture from the eighth to the twelfth century of our era has left to us sculptures which are never likely to be surpassed in their own particular line. The break in the development or stone-carving which accompanied the overthrow of the Rajput chiefs in Gondwana by the Musalmans of the north and the Gonds of the jungle is complete and lasted for close on three centuries.

(3) *The Gond and Musalman period* (1400—1700).—As the Gond principalities settled down on the ruins of the Rajput kingdoms architecture and sculpture began slowly to revive. We hear of temples being built at Chanda by a Gond princess at the end of the fourteenth century on the sites of the temples

of Achalesvara and Mahakali, which now exist. The tombs of the later Gond kings at Chanda are covered with fine tracery said to be the work of imported Musalman artists, and at each side of the entrance is depicted the fabulous Gond lion slaying an elephant, a design which also appears on the gateway of the fort of Gawilgarh. The existing temples of Eknisi and Mahakali at Chanda were built by a Gond queen in the latter seventeenth century, but contain little carving of any merit. The fort of Madan Mahal near Jubbulpore and the castle of Deogarh, built by princes of the other two Gond houses, show a similar heaviness and lack of decoration. The Gond had little taste for sculpture and has left no carvings of any merit behind him.

The best carvings of this period are found in buildings erected by Musalmans. There are some beautifully carved pilasters in the Jami Masjid at Burhanpur, while the Bibi Masjid in the same city and the tomb of Bibi Mohani and Bibi Jalam in Ellichpur (1411 A. D.) show some pretty carven traceries and flowers. There exists also a well-sculptured mosque of the seventeenth century at Daryabad in Ellichpur and the carvings on the palace tower of Raja Mardan Singh in the Ramna forest near Garhakota are assigned to the same period. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the art of sculpture had recovered most of the ground lost in the upheaval of the thirteenth century, but had taken a fresh character in the hands of Musalman craftsmen. Scrolls, mouldings and tracery took the place of figures of men and beasts in high relief, and what sculpture lost in boldness it gained in grace.

(4) The Maratha period in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries calls for little notice. The increasing civilization of the country has brought with it a steady development both in the peculiar style of carving appropriate to Hindu temples and in the more graceful and artistic patterns affected by Jains and Musalmans. The fine unfinished temple of Dudhadari Math in Raipur is probably unique as a specimen of modern Hindu carving in these Provinces (plate IV). The carved figures are a reminiscence of the Hemadpanthi style and are little, if at all, inferior to the existing carvings of the mediæval period. The Rukmi Temple in Nagpur, the Bidkar Temple at Hinganghat with its friezes elaborately carved in scenes from the Ramayan (Plate III), the gate of the mausoleum of Nawab Salawat Khan in Ellichpur with its peacocks and tigers, the perforated marble trellis work of the beautiful Panch Pir tomb at Khimlasa (Saugor), and dozens of other temples, mosques and tombs to be found in most parts of the country, show how complete was the revival of sculpture in the early nineteenth century and how respectable was the level of skill attained by the carvers of the last generation.

Present position and future prospects of the art of stone-carving.

4. Gloomy reports are received from most districts which speak of stone-carving as an extinct art and lament that the carvings in all buildings erected nowadays are being carried out by imported workmen, while for lack of local skill the modern temple idols are imported ready made from Rajputana. It is probable that many of the masterpieces of the past were executed under the direction of foreign sculptors and it is sometimes said that no such thing as indigenous sculpture has ever existed in the Central Provinces. It has been seen that the sculptors of the last generation were possessed of a very respectable degree of skill, and their widely scattered works show that few districts fifty years ago can have been without a carver of some local repute. This disappearance of stone-carving from places where once it flourished is said to have taken place within the memory of old men now living, and the cause is not far to seek. It is precisely within this period that the means of travel have so vastly improved, and the new ease in getting about has had the same effect on local sculpture as on other local industries. Competition has become sharper and the standard expected has risen, so that architects of temples and wealthy people with a desire to decorate their dwellings are less inclined to make the most of the local talent and more ready to import carvers from a distance. Thus in the smaller towns the local sculptor who never possessed very much skill has been driven to abandon his hereditary occupation as no longer lucrative and to take to plaster

moulding, masons' work or other kindred occupations. It is a mistake to wail over the decay of the characteristic Hindu and Musalman sculpture. The art has not yet decayed, but is changing its locality and is perhaps at this moment in no worse a condition than it has been any time these hundred years. The unskilful carvers who used to find employment for lack of better workmen have indeed been frozen out, but there is still plenty of opportunity for the skilled sculptor who is not ashamed to try and improve in his art. Carvers may be scarcer than of old, but good carvers are probably more numerous. Many recent edifices, such as the fine pierced marble tomb of Gulam Kadir Khan and three new Hindu temples in Saugor, the graceful carvings in the Bowie Hospital and the half-finished Jain temples in Hoshangabad, the numerous tiny shrines of carved stone in the villages of the Maratha country and the more modern temples in Nagpur and Jubbulpore—all built within the last thirty years—show that there is no lack of skill ready to hand. There is reason to suppose that sculptures as good as any produced within the last two centuries could be executed at this day by workmen drawn from within the provinces. Sculpture appears to have reached a state not of decay but of flux, and so far there is little cause for despair.

The future prospects of the craft are perhaps less promising. It is hard to say what will be the result of the change in tastes and habits which is now beginning to affect the wealtheir classes of the country. It is likely that for some years at any rate fewer new temples and mosques will be erected, not because the people think less of their religion but because the immediate necessity for adding to the numbers of religious foundations no longer exists and because of the daily widening demands on the resources of the wealthy and the charity of the pious. The proportion of money available in the country for religious purposes must decrease as more is spent by rich men on the education of their sons and on the many new luxuries unknown to their simpler forefathers, while the surplus actually set apart for pious objects is now-adays divided among a number of charities instead of being almost all devoted to religious architecture. The new public buildings which are springing up in the larger towns are seldom exactly objects of beauty, and their erection has brought with it little opportunity for the sculptor to exercise his skill. It seems likely that the stone-carver will be more dependent in the future upon decoration of private houses for his employment, and here he has indeed good reason to lament the changing taste of the present generation. The writer of the Khandwa report has hit on the chief reason for despondency about the future of indigenous sculpture. He says with gentle irony: "The art of sculpture in its higher aspects and conceptions is declining. As far as dwelling houses are concerned architectural ornamentation is never resorted to. If anything in the form of ornamentation is at all desired iron work is obtained from Bombay which is both cheap and elegant." This is a good example of the modern eagerness to adopt vulgar and hideous fashions simply because they are foreign which makes India the despair of the artist. No doubt the same enthusiasm for all that is "cheap and elegant" in western civilization, which leads partially educated persons to assume along with a smattering of English their shoddy travesties of English clothes and boots instead of the serviceable and becoming garments native to the country, will in time persuade the wealthy native of these provinces to adorn his house with posts and railings of vile painted iron in preference to the graceful carved pillars and perforated screens of stone in which the craftsmen of India so readily excel. The Bengal movement for boycotting imported articles may yet prove a blessing to the native sculptor and save from undeserved neglect an ancient and beautiful art.

Castes connected with the craft of stone-carving.

5. In these provinces the art of sculpture is not rigidly confined to one caste or set of castes. The names "Lariya," "Salawat" or "Patharwat," often applied to carvers, are the names not of castes but of occupations. The Lariya or Salawat of the Hindi speaking districts is a Musalman or a low-caste Hindu whose occupation, whether hereditary or adopted, happens to be carving in stone, but his social position and religion are the same as those of the other members of his caste. Dhimars, Mochis, Sonkars, Chamars, Koris, Rajputs, Gonds and

numerous other castes are found carving stone and calling themselves Lariyas or Salawats in the north and west of the province. It is of course useless to enter into a disquisition on each of these castes.

In the Maratha country and in Sambalpur the case is different. Here, though there is nothing to prevent a member of any caste from working as a sculptor, the stone-carver is generally a Sansia in Sambalpur and a Telinga among the Marathas. The Telingas (also known as Vaddars or Beldars) are immigrants from the Telugu country above the Godavari and still speak Telegu among themselves. The caste is divided into a number of endogamous sub-divisions, who however do not object to eat together. Names of some sub-divisions are Chaudhri, Uparwar, Munarwar, Pantriliwar, Kapewar. There are however many others. The Telinga practises *sradh* and infant marriage of girls, eats meat as long as the animal has not been skinned or even touched by a Chamar or Mahar, drinks liquor often to excess, and re-cognizes *pat* marriage of widows. He is supposed to be rather a dirty person and is declared by a Brahman correspondent to "stink from afar". All the same he aspires to a respectable position among artisan castes and describes himself as equal to a Kunbi. One sub-division—Chaudhri—even wears a sacred thread. It is obligatory among Telingas in Chanda for one male out of every household to attend every funeral of a caste-fellow in the neighbourhood. In the same district the plough is looked upon as so sacred an emblem of the god of marriage and fertility that no marriage is solemnized without a plough being produced.

The Sansias of Sambalpur are divided into two sub-divisions, which are endogamous but eat together—the Benaria Uriya and the Khandait Uriya. The former division still practise carving, but the latter were formerly sepoys in the Raja's armies and have given up the craft. Partly owing to his importance as a temple decorator, the Sansia holds a high position among Uriya castes and no Brahman will refuse water from his hand. Widow remarriage is, however, not discountenanced.

Religious belief connected with stone-carving.

6. The Telinga may be a Vaishnavi (Tirmandar) or a Shaivi (Ubeddar), but he worships Khandoba, an incarnation of Vishnu, as the tutelary deity of his caste and also the goddess Devi. Curiously enough the hero Vishwakarma has no place in his calendar. Unlike other artisan castes, the Telinga does not worship his tools at Holi, Dasara and Dewali, but only on Ganesh Chaturthi (Ganpati Chaut), on which day the tools are supposed to need a complete rest.

The Lariya or Salawat, if he be a Musalman, pays special reverence to the prophet Abraham or Khalil Allah (*Friend of God*), as they generally call him. Abraham is supposed to have taught the sculptor his craft and is regarded as the patron saint of all carvers, whose name must be invoked before any work is taken in hand.

Similarly the Hindu sculptor, be he Salawat, Lariya or Sansia, specially worships the hero Vishwakarma—the inspired architect who made an exact model of the earth and all that therein is as an acceptable offering to the Supreme Creator, but was annihilated by that god lest haply he might learn too much and become a match for the powers on high. A Sanskrit treatise known as the Shilp Shastra is supposed to have been composed by Vishwakarma, and in it are embodied all the wisdom needful for the practise of all the arts and crafts. The name of the Shilp Shastra is well known to all sculptors, but I have never met or heard of one who had studied or even seen a copy of that divine work and am not aware whether such a book really exists.

Customs connected with the craft.

7. It cannot be said that the members of different castes who practise stone-carving in these provinces have made any attempt to form themselves into a trade corporation or guild of their own, but among stone-carvers as in other trades a system of apprenticeship exists by which a boy who has not been born in a family of sculptors can obtain tuition in the craft. The arrangements

made for such apprenticeships are not subject to confirmation by any trade panchayat. In fact no panchayat of the trade apart from the castes composing it is known to exist. The master is known as the *ustad* and the apprentice as the *chela*, and the relation is commenced by the *chela* giving to the *ustad* a cocoanut and a new pagri as emblems of the position in which they stand to one another. The services of the *chela* while he is picking up the craft in the shop of the *ustad* are supposed to recompense the latter for the trouble of giving instruction. No other payment is made, but on holidays the *chela* will visit his *ustad* with a present of flowers, pan supari and other trifles, and in return will receive the older man's blessing. If the *ustad* be a Hindu, this little ceremony is peformed on Diwali, Dasara and the second day of Phalgun ; if a Musalman, it takes place on the *Id* days. It is regarded as a token of skill and standing among his fellow-workers when a sculptor has several *chelas* learning their craft from him. There is nothing to prevent a Hindu *chela* studying under a Musalman *ustad*, or *vice versa*. It is not surprising to find that a Mahar carver is only allowed to carve idols for the shrines of his own particular caste. The Mahar and his work are alike debarred from entering the places of worship of his betters. Temple images are not carved by Musalmans, perhaps because it is contrary to the doctrines of Islam, but more probably because the pious Hindu does not care to give such work to a *mlecha*.

A *baradari* of skilful mochi carvers is said to exist at Bilehri and another of Dhimars at Deori, both in the Jabalpur District, which may in time develope into real guilds.

Styles practised by sculptors.

8. There is little that is original in the work of sculptors who practise in these days, and in all that they do tradition is supreme. In carving images of the Hindu gods no divergence from the standard type is ever attempted. The attitude, attributes and number of limbs of every god and hero is stereotyped by the tradition of ages, and a departure from tradition would probably cause the idol to be rejected as unorthodox. An old carver in Wardha showed me a figure of a "*Nag*" in black stone which he had carved when a boy and told me that the knot formed by the coils of the snake was in one place different from the knot sanctioned by usage and therefore he had been unable to sell the image, but had retained it as a family idol in his own house. Carvings upon pillars and arabesques are equally conventional in design, but the patterns are as beautiful and graceful as they are probably ancient. The Jain temple in Plate X shows the class of work referred to. The patterns are handed down from father to son and from master to apprentice by word of mouth, but it is difficult to see how the various designs are so communicated without sketches, and some liberty in the arrangement of details is probably left to the individual carver. Still the general proportions of each part of a figure, pillar or scroll to the whole is fixed by the usage of ages, and it is supposed to be unlucky to depart from them, ensuring a speedy end to the innovator and his work alike. These proportions, are preserved in a series of maxims or *memoriæ technicæ* which perhaps comes from the Shilp Shastra, but I have only heard them repeated in Telugu by Telingas and am unable to give any specimen. These rhymes and technical names for every part of a traditional pattern form the theory and groundwork of the sculptor's craft.

The pierced fretwork screens so often seen in Musalman tombs are perhaps less stereotyped and it is not impossible for a clever workman to invent new geometrical designs. The gateway to the temple of Jamnadas in Sitabaldi (Nagpur) shows a considerable variety of pierced patterns in sandstone.

It is in designing friezes of carved figures like those in the Dudhadhari Math at Raipur and the Bidkar Temple at Hinganghat that the sculptor has most freedom, and the comparative rareness of such sculptures shows how little the carvers of these provinces hanker after opportunities for originality.

Materials, process, and tools in use.

9. The stone generally used for carving small images is a black stone resembling marble, known in the Maratha country as *Jamulghat* or a green stone like jade. For larger figures a fine red sandstone (called *Parshama* by Marathas and

Dalima in Sambalpur) is employed. The red stone elephants which flank the doorway of the Nagpur Museum are made of this stone. A white sandstone known as *Ragori* is also used. All the numerous and rather striking carvings of the Rukmi Temple in Nagpur are made of white marble, but this is an unusual piece of magnificence. It is useless to give a catalogue of the varieties of stone used for sculpture throughout the province or their vernacular names which differ from district to district.

Before any piece of sculpture is taken in hand the surface of the stone is thoroughly moistened and then carefully smoothed, first with a chipping hammer (*basuli*) and then with a series of chisels. When sufficiently smooth the design is marked out upon the stone. If at all complicated the compass, square, plummet and measure are used to mark out the proportions, and the design is sketched out with pencil or charcoal. It is said that at this stage even numbers are carefully avoided as unlucky. The pencil lines of the pattern are now chipped lightly out with a fine chisel and the actual carving begins. While the work is going on the stone is carefully kept moist and is covered with damp cloths at night. The desired relief is gradually obtained by the use of chisels and gouges of various shapes and sizes. When the carving is finished the surface is smoothed by means of a stone-polisher and the crevices are finished off with a pointed file. The whole process is completed by a final rubbing with a *namda* (felt) pad and a mixture of wood ashes and bhang. The process is thus long and tedious in the extreme, and the amount of labour expended on some of the ancient Hemadpanthi temples is a thing to wonder at. Two brothers, who are well-known sculptors in Ellichpur, recently carved from a stone known as *Kuchi Kasoti* an image of the god Ashta Bhuj with one head and eight hands seated on a tiger and holding a spear, sword, trident, *gada* and the images of Bhisasur and Mankasur. The brothers worked two or three hours a day and took two months to finish this elaborate work. They value the completed idol at Rs. 50 and complain that a similar image could be imported from Jaipur for half the price.

The following is believed to be an exhaustive list of the tools employed by carvers in these provinces. I do not profess to give the vernacular name of every tool used in every district, which would be an impossible task. The vernacular names given are Hindi unless otherwise stated:—

Hammers (*Hathoda*) of various sizes for driving chisels and gouges; *Ghana* (Uriya), *Gutam* (Telugu).

Basuli, a tool like a hatchet for rough surface dressing.

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Square (*Gunia*).

T. Square (*Randha*).

Measure (*Gaj*).

Plumb-line (*Dori*).

Plummet (*Gola*).

Compasses (*Parkar*).

File (*Reti*) for polishing and finishing crevices.

Wedges (*Thapa*, Uriya) of different shapes and sizes for splitting stone.

Polishing stone (*Kunda*).

Chisels (*Taki*)—*Ulli* (Telugu), comprising the following varieties:—

Kalam, *Narji*, fine chisels.

Duwa, chisel with slightly concave edge.

Chheni or *Chirni*, medium fine chisel.

Salga Taki, *Chekas Taki*, a fine chisel shaped like a nail and suddenly broadening towards the edge.

Pohori, *Pichor*, *Sutki*, broad chisels.

Gol pati, a gouge.

Trowels (*Manjula*), of various sizes used when two blocks of stone have to be joined together.

Saw for cutting stone (*Karoti*).

These implements explain themselves and no drawings of them are needed. They are mostly made of imported steel and the cutting instruments often come ready made from Sheffield.

NOTE.—I have made a good many inquiries, but learn that the art of stone-inlaying is nowhere practised in these provinces and there is no indication that it ever existed. In Saugor I have seen cups and plates of white alabaster inlaid with flowers, fruit and leaves in coloured stone, but these had come from Delhi at the time of the Durbar and nobody had ever heard of such things being made in the Central Provinces. I can only conclude that in this country the art of stone-inlaying is non-existent.

A. K. SMITH,

September 1, 1905.

Assistant Commissioner.

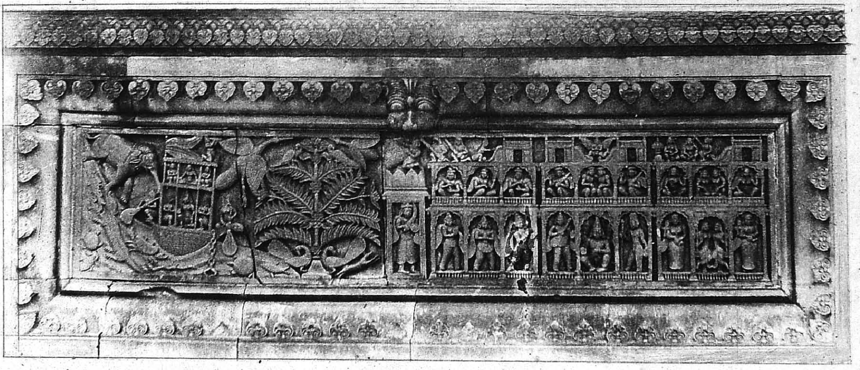
Sectt. Press, Nagpur:—No. 1417, G.D. 7-11-05—100.

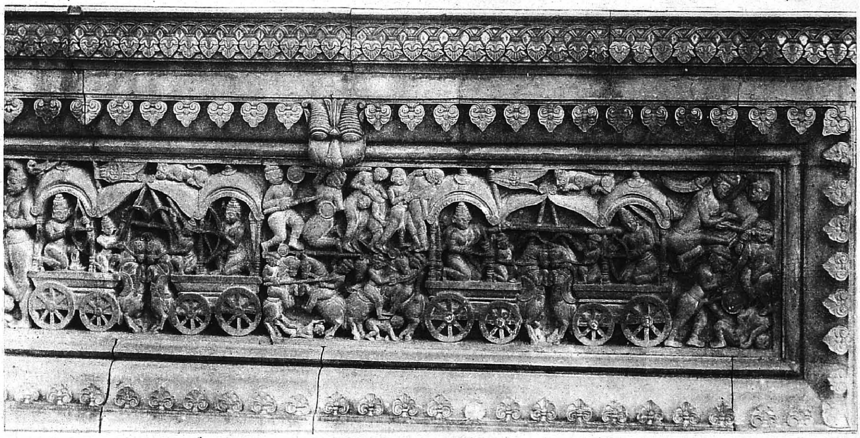
PLATE I.

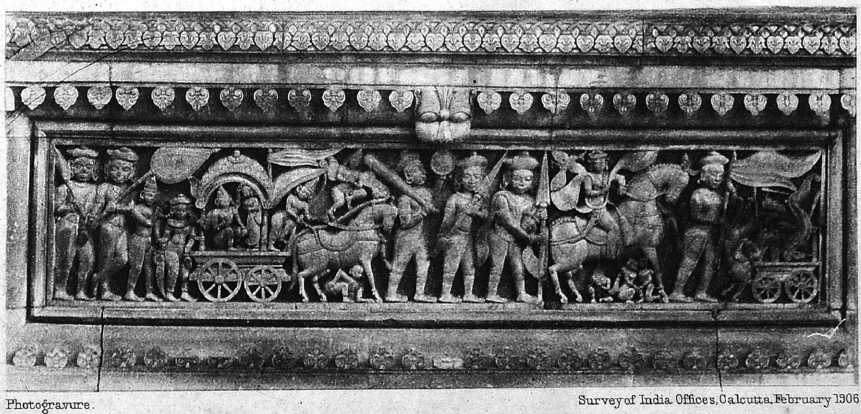
PLATE II.

Photogravure.

Survey of India Offices Calcutta, February, 1906.







Photogravure. Survey of India Offices, Calcutta, February 1906.

CARVED FRIEZES FROM BIDHAR TEMPLE, HINGANGHAT.

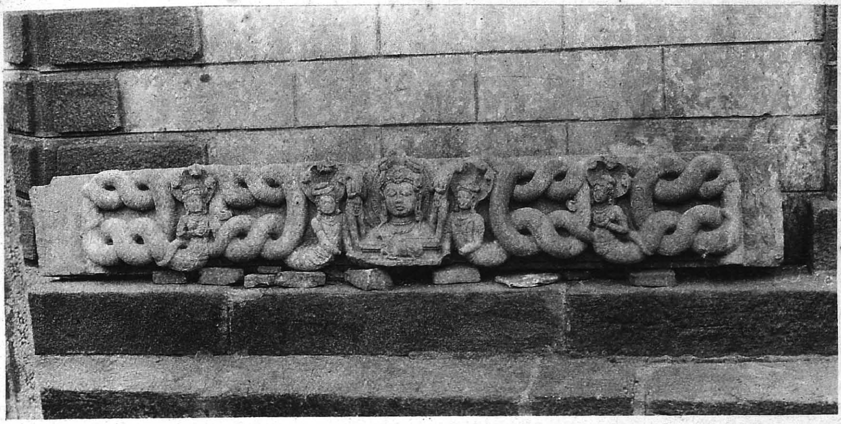
PLATE V.

Photogravure.

Survey of India Offices, Calcutta, February 1906.

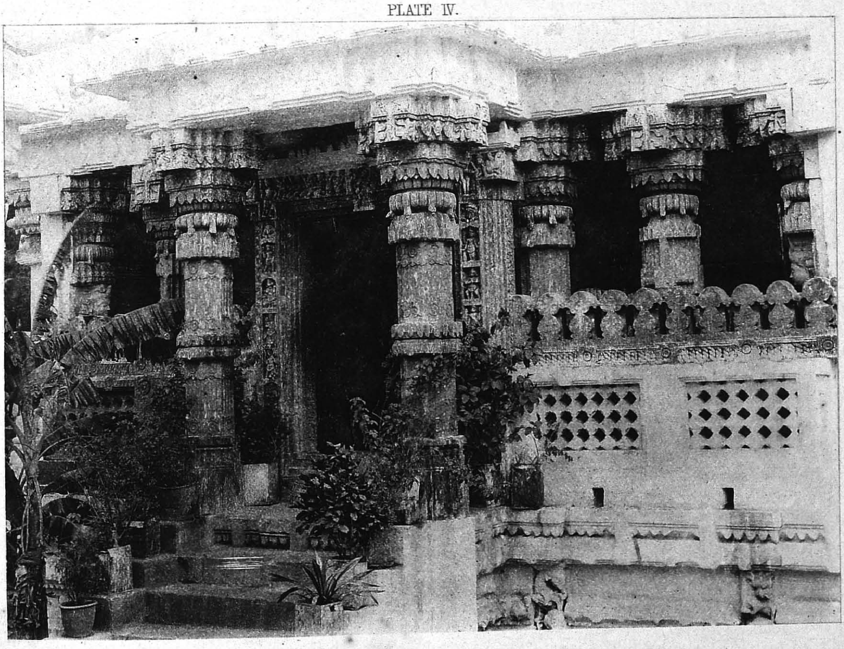
ANCIENT SCULPTURES FROM TEMPLE OF CHAUNSAT JOGINI, BHERGHAT. (MARBLE ROCKS)

PLATE VI.



CARVED LINTEL FROM ANCIENT TEMPLE AT DHAMTARI (RAIPUR)

PLATE IV.



MODERN TEMPLE—DUDHADHARI MATH, RAIPUR.

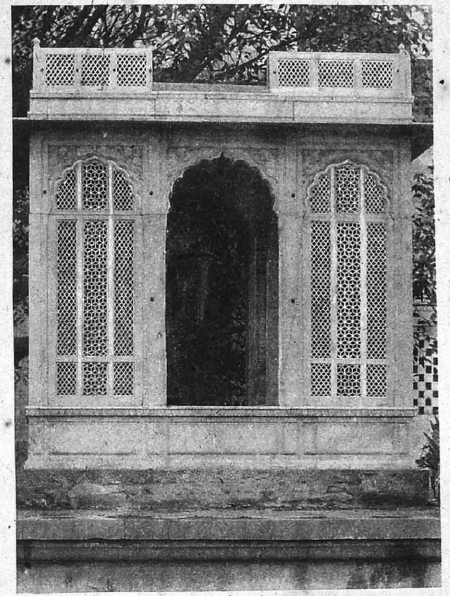
PLATE VII.

Photogravure.

Survey of India Offices, Calcutta, February 1906.

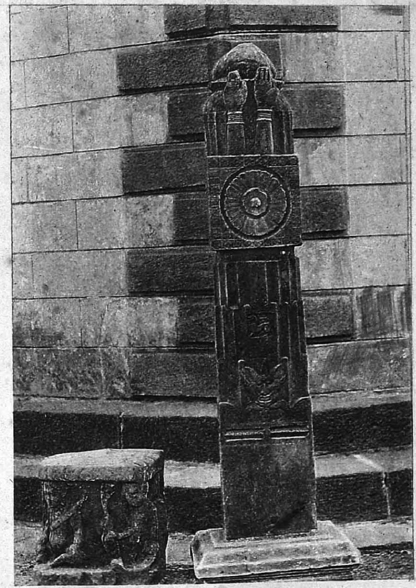
ANCIENT CARVED FIGURES FROM SIRPUR, DISTRICT RAIPUR.

PLATE VIII.



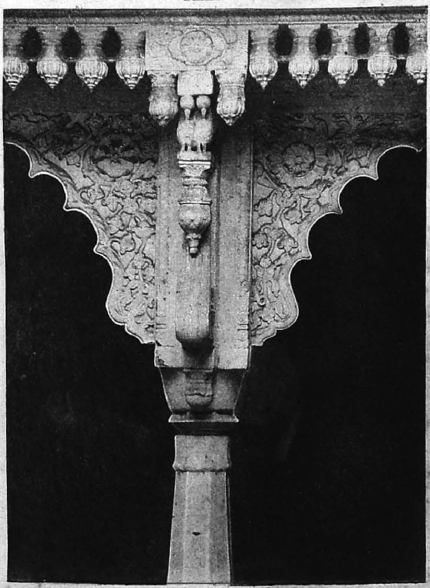
TOMB OF GULAM KADAR KHAN IN MOSQUE OF AZIMULLA KHAN, SAUGOR.

PLATE IX.



CARVED SATI PILLAR, RAIPUR MUSEUM.

PLATE X.



Photogravure.

CARVED PILLAR, JAIN TEMPLE, RAHATGARH.

PLATE XI.

Survey of India Offices, Calcutta, February 1906.

FRAGMENT OF COLUMN, DHAMTARI.

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